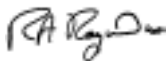December 21, 2004

Dear Nebraskans,

This report entitled "The Impact of Cardiovascular Disease in Nebraska" is the most comprehensive review and analysis done on this subject by the Nebraska Health and Human Services System. It represents a near two-year effort to identify the impact of cardiovascular disease in Nebraska and identify populations at greatest risk. Many of the findings are extremely significant, and it is imperative that in order to effectively prevent and control cardiovascular disease, Nebraskans work together to address this critical problem.

The lack of adequate physical activity and unhealthy eating habits are two of the primary reasons causing these unhealthy trends among Nebraskans, resulting in epidemic increases in overweight and obesity. Sadly, in 2001, Nebraska adults ranked next to last in recommended physical activity compared to the rest of the nation. Studies also show that both Nebraska youth and adults rank well below the national average in the consumption of the USDA's recommended five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day.

While it is critically important to focus on preventing cardiovascular disease, many people in Nebraska are already at high-risk for or have cardiovascular disease. Consequently, it is important that our residents experiencing cardiovascular episodes recognize their signs, act immediately by calling 9-1-1, and have health care systems in place to promptly and effectively treat their cardiovascular conditions.

Please utilize the information in this report to bring about change in your family, workplace, organization, church, or community. I ask for your continued support of the Cardiovascular Health Program and if you have any questions or suggestions, feel free to contact me or the program's dedicated staff.

Yours very truly,

Richard Raymond, M.D.
Director of Regulation and Licensure and Chief Medical Officer
Nebraska Health and Human Services System